

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

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SENATE REPUBLICANS RAM DRILLING IN ARCTIC WILDLIFE REFUGE INTO BUDGET

*BUDGETARY BACKDOOR MANEUVER THREATENS ENTIRE
WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM, SAYS MARKEY*

Washington, DC: The Senate Republicans used a backdoor maneuver to try to force drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge today, attaching the drilling provision to the 2006 annual budget. An amendment to strike the provision, offered by Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), failed narrowly by a vote of 49-51. Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), the lead House sponsor of the Udall-Eisenhower Arctic Wilderness Act (H.R. 567), acknowledged the setback but expressed optimism that protectors of the Arctic Refuge will still prevail.

“The Republican Senate sent a chilling message to future generations of Americans today by voting to remove protections against oil and gas development in the nation’s most pristine national wildlife refuge,” said Rep. Markey. “It is now up to the American people to redouble their commitment to protecting our wild areas. If the drillers succeed in invading the most pristine refuge of all, then not a single wildlife refuge in America will be safe. Our children will be left to wonder what it was once like in the United States when people respected our most unique natural areas.”

In early February, Rep. Markey was joined by 107 of his Democratic colleagues in urging the House Budget Committee to keep the Arctic Refuge out of the budget. “In poll after poll, the American people have expressed their disapproval of using the budget to decide such a contentious issue,” said Rep. Markey. “The fate of the Arctic Refuge deserves to be debated among members of Congress, not scheduled for destruction by a line item on a balance sheet.”

“The American people believe there should be some places on this earth left the way the Almighty made them in the first place,” Markey concluded. “When we finally meet our Maker, we are not going to be asked our position on evolution or the Big Bang. We are going to be asked about what we did to protect the resources we were given. The Congress still has time to pull back from this folly, and we must do everything we can to see that it does.”

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